WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for enhancing detection of particles of interest in a portal detection system, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a portal having a plurality of sidewalls and a passage between the sidewalls, a ceiling connecting the sidewalls and disposed above the passage and a particle detection apparatus having an inlet in the ceiling and communicating with the passage for receiving air flowing adjacent to a human suspect in the passage; and

directing a plurality of short puffs of air into the passage with sufficient velocity for dislodging particles of interest trapped in clothing of the human suspect in the passage.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of directing the short puffs of air into the passage comprises sequentially directing short puffs of air from a lower level in the passage to an upper level.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of directing short puffs of air into the passage comprises directing short puffs of air into the passage from a plurality of different directions.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of directing the short puffs of air into the passage comprises directing each puff angularly upwardly into the passage.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of directing short puffs of air into the passage comprises directing each sequential puff for a time of about 50 ms.

6. The method of claim 1, comprising pausing about 100 ms between each sequential puff.